

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace paragraph no. 0052, as follows:

[0052] FIG. 5 shows the x component of the highly compressed beam 57, which passes through the beam focusing lens 30 and results in the focal point 62. The collimated x component of the highly compressed beam 57 is sharply focused at the focal point 62 ~~60~~, which creates the sharply focused side of the astigmatic beam spot 58.

Please replace paragraph no. 0067, as follows:

[0067] The astigmatic focal beam spot can also be used advantageously to scribe or machine metal films such as copper or molybdenum. Due to high thermal conductivity, laser cutting of metal films using conventional techniques has shown extensive heat affected zones along the wake of the laser cut. With the application of the astigmatic focal beam spot, the 5 $\mu$ m beam width in the focused axis significantly reduces a laser cutting kerf width, which subsequently reduces heat affected zones, collateral material damage and ablation-generated debris. As an example, FIG. 14 shows narrow and shapely resolved cut lines on molybdenum. The size of the astigmatic beam was adjusted to have about 200 $\mu$ m in the astigmatic axis and about 5 $\mu$ m in the focused axis. This resulted in 50 $\mu$ m deep scribing with a speed at about 20 mm/sec, using 266nm DPSS laser with on target power of about 2.5 Watt at 25kHz. Other types of metal can also be cut.